

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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SECRETARY MORTON ANNOUNCES TASK FORCE TO STUDY PREDATOR
CONTROL PROGRAMS BEFORE THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION
CONSERVATION SUMMIT, ESTES PARK, COLORADO

Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton today announced the formation of a blue ribbon Task Force which will study Predator Control programs throughout the country. The Task Force, sponsored jointly by Interior and the Council on Environmental Quality, will be composed entirely of wildlife management experts from various universities.

Members of the panel are: Dr. Stanley Cain, Chairman, University of Michigan; Dr. Fred Wagner of Utah State University; Dr. John Kadlec, University of Michigan; Dr. Richard Cooley of the University of California, Santa Cruz; Dr. Maurice Hornecker, University of Idaho; Dr. Durwood Allen of Purdue University and Dr. A. Starker Leopold of the University of California, Berkeley.

Speaking at the National Wildlife Federation Conservation Summit at Estes Park, Colorado, Secretary Morton also announced plans to step up Interior efforts to preserve non-game wildlife species. Morton said, "We in the Department are becoming increasingly aware of the alterations occurring in non-game populations as a result of man's impact on the natural landscape. America's wildlife management efforts have traditionally been directed towards species of sports value."

A further proposed program within Interior, said Morton, will be increased manpower for the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife's river basin section which reviews all public works projects whose development could potentially endanger wildlife populations and habitat. The river basin section now reviews all dredge and fill applications, all public works projects, including those of the Corps of Engineers, Soil Conservation Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Atomic Energy Commission and the Federal Power Commission.

(Text Follows)

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REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR ROGERS C. B. MORTON AT THE
NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION CONSERVATION SUMMIT, ESTES PARK,
COLORADO, JULY 9, 1971.

In the past, I might have addressed this highly aware and deeply committed conservation summit gathering as the "conservation cognoscenti." Today, that venerable old giant of a word "conservation" has been temporarily eclipsed and "environmentally erudite" might come closer to fitting this year's fashion in words.

But I think it best at this point that I leave alliteration to our able Vice President and turn to a very brief examination of why I believe I am here here in the treasure chest of the Rockies addressing you at the end of an intensive period of study, exploration, and environmental soul-searching. You are definitely an environmentally sophisticated group so I needn't spend much time re-hashing the environmental crises which plague us, nor selling you the proposition that wise environmental practices must be founded upon morality. Years ago, Aldo Leopold said it all by enunciating that man is steward of the land---the environment---his is the responsibility of prudent management and cautious protection of that environment for future generations. Rather than moralize, however, I'd like to try to lay it on the line ... to "let it all hang out" as they say ... and talk environmental policy.

The conservation record of this organization indicates your interest, enthusiasm, and ... I will say ... your love for the animal kingdom. You have faced the bulldozer and the dredge. You have witnessed and decried the all-too-often rampant development of huge chunks of this previously unspoiled continent. ... a continent with so vast and majestic a storehouse of natural resources that the words of Pogo, the comic strip sage, come immediately to my mind. "We is faced with insurmountable opportunity." God help us if we manage to surmount it.

The immediate cadre of conservation crises is no longer waiting in the wings but is hamming it up on center stage. We see the tide rising in the Department of the Interior because we often use wildlife populations as our "environmental barometer" if you will.

The basic needs of wildlife are essentially the same as those of man. Most species of wildlife are products of a clean, fertile, and productive environment. They must have adequate food, clean water and protection from the elements if they are to survive. So must man. And. . . . unspoiled tidal

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marshes rank in economic productivity above the best prairie croplands. Marsh-rimmed estuaries are vital to the more important commercial marine fishes and to crabs, shrimps, and shellfish. Continued destruction of tidal wetlands threatens a major source of human food and the livelihoods of many people.

The well-being of our fish and wildlife constituency is about as good an index as we can possibly monitor to determine just how we're doing to make sure we continue to share the crust and the waters of the earth with the rest of her creatures.

If we find more species have to go on the endangered list, it is apparent we're losing the battle; if migratory flocks are on the increase, we're moving ahead; if the life cycles of our flora and fauna approach the balance in which they can all thrive, we'll be doing our job. And then ... we will reach a real threshold of environmental management.

While I'm talking about fish and wildlife, let me tell you about Nat Reed. Nat Reed has just joined the Department as Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks and he is one of the most aggressive, knowledgeable, and dedicated conservationists in America. That's why he's here. He didn't waste any time getting involved either. I know he didn't because I've already been deluged with both screams of protect and shouts of glee with reference to his activities.

Nat, with my approval and insistence, has forcefully begun to recondition the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife and to bring this dedicated team of professionals back into fighting condition. The Bureau is really the heart and the guts of Interior when it comes to protecting our fish and wildlife resources from the ravages of civilization.

I believe that Nat Reed, with a revitalized Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife will spearhead a renaissance of environmental thinking and action. Rest assured we'll excite the Bureau in the months to come to meet the tremendous challenge we face.

The Bureau's river basin section is principally responsible for reviewing all dredge and fill applications, all Public Works projects, including those of the Corps of Engineers, the Soil Conservation Service, Bureau of Reclamation, all power plant sites and any other activities which impact fish and wildlife habitat. This includes all Atomic Energy Commission and Federal Power Commission licenses and permits.

Five weeks ago, I gave approval to immediately add an additional 150 permanent employees to the over-committed Bureau staff. Most of these additional people have been assigned to river basin studies. This,

in itself, is an important first step because it is really in this arena that the effort to protect our wildlife resources will be won or lost.

Much of the destruction of our fish and wildlife resources in the past has occurred because we have not had professionals on the site to tell us what the consequences of a particular action might be. We intend by the end of 1972 to substantially increase the Bureau capability in this key area. This will greatly improve our ability to review and comment on all projects affecting the cherished wildlife resources that you and I are working to protect.

The predator control program managed by the Division of Wildlife Services has been under continuing fire for many months. As most of you know, in 1965, Secretary Udall established a review committee to examine this problem in depth. In fact, Tom Kimball was a member of that committee and made significant contributions to their final report, known as the Leopold Report.

Many of the recommendations contained in that report have since been implemented and we have seen a vast improvement in the operation of this program. As you know, however, there is room for further improvement.

Well before the Jackson Canyon eagle kill last month, I agreed to cooperate with the Council on Environmental Quality to initiate a complete review of predator control activities to identify problem areas and seek their resolution. This study team will be composed of seven non-governmental professionals recognized for their expertise in the wildlife field. Unless the New York Times or the Washington Post have had access to them, I shall announce them for the first time tonight.

The Chairman is Dr. Stanley Cain from the University of Michigan. Joining him for this important mission will be: Dr. Fred Wagner of Utah State University; Dr. John Kadlec from the University of Michigan; Dr. Richard Cooley of the University of California at Santa Cruz; Dr. Maurice Hornecker from the University of Idaho; Dr. Durwood Allen of Purdue University and Dr. A. Starker Leopold of the University of California, Berkeley.

Let me add that I absolutely guarantee that the findings of these experts will be given a full hearing and review by wool growers and cattlemen, as well as wildlife interests. The study already has received funding from Interior and the Council on Environmental Quality, and I personally pledge that performance will follow program so that our imperiled predators will not perish in a sea of platitudes.

The Task Force has been charged with the responsibility of examining all aspects of the issue, including poisoning carried on by the private sector and state and local government as well. They have been instructed to examine with care the economics of national insurance programs as a possible alternate to predator control and to recommend any changes which may be needed in our present administration of this program.

The problems of predator control and its impact upon wildlife species calls to mind another serious concern of the Department -- the problem of providing for and protecting non-game species of wildlife. We in the Department are becoming increasingly aware of the alterations occurring in non-game populations as a result of man's impact on the natural landscape. America's wildlife management efforts have traditionally been directed towards species of sports value. A rather startling confirmation of this fact is found in the 1969 funding figures aimed at wildlife research, management and habitat protection.

The total funding from all sources -- federal, state, and private -- was about \$142 million. Only \$6 million of that was clearly related to non-game species. Trends indicate that the non-consumptive enjoyment of wildlife species will soon exceed consumptive uses.

The Department intends, in the coming months, to examine this situation closely and determine where added emphasis can be given to protect these non-game species as they too are a viable part of our life support system.

I would like to share with you some news of another accelerated program which we have underway at the present time. I have ordered the National Park Service and the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife to double their efforts to prepare wilderness proposals covering lands in the National Parks and the National Wildlife Refuge systems. Our society is going to need wilderness in the near future more than ever before. The Park Service, which came up with all of five recommendations in a period between the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964 and the beginning of fiscal year 1971, completed 10 studies in FY 71, 9 of which have gone to the Congress. The Park Service expects to complete 20 additional studies in Fiscal Year 1972.

The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife has already had 29 areas of refuge lands designated wilderness areas. Seven proposed refuge areas, totaling 340,000 acres are now before Congress, sent over by the President in April. Two other refuge areas are in the process of being submitted and the Bureau expects to complete the report on 9 additional areas by this fall, making a total for this year of 23 proposals covering almost five million acres.

Wilderness is not just for man. We share the earth with millions of life forms. Some endangered species like the condor and the timber wolf depend on wilderness for their continued existence. They were here before we were. Is their claim less than ours?

In the wilderness, in the estuary, on the prairie and the desert... we will win this battle. I stand in confidence before you tonight. In the past, nearly all systems in which human beings have been involved have managed to keep the results of idiocy and brilliance in balance, albeit a precarious one. The choice ... the mandate for our time seems relatively clear. Maintaining the balance is the sustenance of life for ourselves and the promise of a future for our children.

The role of the Department of the Interior in maintaining that balance is a formidable one. I pledge to you that we will plan that role as deftly as possible, with vigor and intelligence, steadfastly and cautiously, and we will succeed.

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